# Neutralizing biothreats through disease forecasting

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by Nick Generous

Runaway epidemics are scary. The problem is, diseases don't respect borders and can't be added to the no fly list. Global interconnectedness and the ease of travel hinder prevention efforts and make epidemics an ongoing national security threat. We often don't see them coming.

And yet, forecasting disease is a tricky business. Any forecast, whether it's for the weather, crops, or the economy, relies on lots of data. Health records are an obvious source, but their built-in lag time in reporting limits their usefulness for disease forecasting. So a multidisciplinary team with expertise in epidemiology, ecology, mathematics, data science, computer programming, and remote sensing at Los Alamos National Laboratory have turned to data from some surprising, and surprisingly familiar, sources. Look no farther than what's under your thumb, plus extensive satellite imagery.

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